

MINUTES OF THE RUTHERFORD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 19, 2013 – 9 AM

Present: Ronnie Harrill, Chairman; John Bittle; Jim Huffstickler; Doug Atchley, Dwayne Harris; Phillip Miller; Amy Jenkins; Mike Parton

Call to Order and Welcome by Chairman Ronnie Harrill, who led in prayer.

Motion to approve minutes from July 15, 2013, meeting by Phillip Miller; seconded by Jim Huffstickler and unanimously approved by committee.

New Business:

Chairman Harrill made the members aware that Vice Chairman, Kim Warner resigned from this Planning Commission, thus the office of Vice Chairman is vacant. Chairman Harrill called for nominations for Vice Chairman: Jim Huffstickler nominated John Bittle for Vice Chairman. With no other volunteers or nominations, Mike Parton motioned to close nominations; Doug Atchley seconded, and John Bittle was unanimously voted as Vice Chairman. John accepted this office and thanks the board for their confidence in him.

Old Business:

GreyRock update, Dave Odom of Odom Engineering – This month's update in a word "rain," as we've experienced over 20" of rainfall at Greyrock in the month of July alone. The last of the stone is going in on Project 4B. I anticipate wrapping that up mid to late next week. They are only able to get about 2-3 days per week due to the weather. Project 7 is continuing to make progress. The contractor is on the final section at the beginning. The Project 11 bid opening has been delayed until August 22nd to allow contractors time to walk the project with the centerline being staked. Project 5 & 6 paving is underway.

Queens Gap update, again by Dave Odom of Odom Engineering – Water system design is continuing. I met with Maria Hunnicutt and we have an agreed upon list of items to recover costs. I am working on the PER to identify the actual costs in detail for the project. Project 1 Pre-Bid Meeting was held Aug 6th. Five contractors attended. Bids will open next Thursday (22nd). Project 2 design is continuing. We are developing the plan for the stream cleanup now as well. We met with Mr. McCurry last to discuss the sediment removal. He is amenable to our approach.

Miscellaneous Business:

Solar Farm Research: Chairman Harrill informed the board that the Sub-Committee and Commissioner Eckler attended a solar forum in Asheville on August 8 receiving information from N.C. Sustainable Energy and NC State. The information presented also contained several concerns most often conveyed by the public. Those concerns include: Hazardous materials, decommissioning, heat island, property values, public safety including fires, noise, water/streams impacts, etc. The presentation and panel of experts who fielded questions attempted to communicate that these concerns can be minimized. Chairman also asked the planner to briefly share information regarding the timing. Turns out that there are several tax incentives with construction timing tied to the end of this calendar year. This timing is so critical, that it is best for the industry that this moratorium was reduced to 90 days so, not to hinder these incentives. John Bittle further described the August Commissioners meeting and discussion regarding completing this work inside the 90 day moratorium. Mr. Bittle also shared a brief description of the public comments that were shared during the this August 5 Commissioners meeting. The webcast of this meeting can be viewed at:

<http://www.rutherfordcountync.gov/Departments/governingbody/webcastagenda>

Chairman Harrill noted that the former vice chairman was to be part of the solar subcommittee to meet and research this subject more frequently then share updates with this full planning commission during the monthly meeting. Obviously, we needed a volunteer to serve as part of this subcommittee to replace Kim Warner. Furthermore, he noted that based upon the 90 day timing this solar subcommittee needs to consider meeting on a weekly basis. After brief discussion, Jim Huffstickler volunteered to serve on this solar subcommittee. The subcommittee reported their progress in calls, conversations and meetings with several other Counties to review and get feedback on solar regulation to include taking a look at the Clay County ordinance that was specifically named in an editorial from the local paper. In addition, this subcommittee has had calls and meetings with solar industry reps and scheduled site visits of solar farms. The first site visit is set for Sept. 3 in Cleveland County; Chairman Harrill noted that Commissioner Eckler wanted to attend that site visit and asked if any other members were interested.

The planner described how helpful a solar workshop could be? This workshop would be to specifically invite citizen and industry input to clarify questions, determine proper setbacks, help alleviate unwarranted concerns and much more. That kind of feedback could prove extremely valuable. The board agreed and set the date for this workshop on the evening of Sept. 12. The planner will secure a location and email all details to planning board, County manager, Commissioners, newspaper, etc. This solar subcommittee agreed to meet each Tuesday at 9:00 AM and will begin specific plans and preparation for this workshop during tomorrow's subcommittee meeting.

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September/October regular meeting location: The Planner noted that this regular meeting space is not available for the next two months due to relocating the County's tax office operations. The Tax office is undergoing renovations during September and October and while the tax office is temporarily operating out of this facility at 289 N. Main St., Rutherfordton, all meetings require an alternate location. The September and October Planning Commission meetings will be held at Isothermal Community College, Foundation Building in one of the seminar rooms just outside the Auditorium.

Adjournment – With no other business noted by Chairman Harrill, motion was made to adjourn by Doug Atchley and seconded by Mike Parton with unanimous vote.